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Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty-fourth session

1-12 March 2010

Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals

Statement by the Alulbayt Foundation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2010/1.



Statement

Combating premarital sex and teenage pregnancies through the idea of rights to oneself

Introduction

1. The fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women aims to review the implementation of the 1995 Beijing Declaration, which focuses on women's empowerment, equality, dignity and ultimately, developing the full potential of girls and women of all ages. In the light of these terms, the Alulbayt Foundation's research department, the Centre for Islamic Shi'a Studies (CISS), would like to propose a specific review of paragraph 30 of the Beijing Declaration. Paragraph 30 states that Governments are to "ensure equal access to and equal treatment of women and men in education and health care and enhance women's sexual and reproductive health as well as education". Although the Beijing Declaration emphasizes the rights and advancement of women, which is commendable, we believe that it lacks a deliberation on respecting one's body parts. Empowerment must be balanced with the ability to refuse and deny, particularly when it comes to sexual relationships and young women.

Premarital sex and teenage pregnancies

2. The focus of our statement is the ability of the Beijing Declaration to tackle premarital sex and teenage pregnancies. In our research, we have found two important paragraphs from the World Youth Report 2005¹ that illustrate the sexual problems young people are going through:

(a) Paragraph 60 states:

Young people worldwide are reaching puberty at earlier ages and marrying later. Premarital sex is becoming more widespread. Despite a trend towards later marriage in much of the world, millions of girls are still expected to marry and begin childbearing in their teens, often before they are ready to do so. Data for the late 1990s show that among young women who were sexually active by age 20, only 51 per cent in Africa and 45 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean initiated sexual activity prior to marriage. By contrast, the corresponding proportion for males was 90 per cent in Africa and 95 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean, and in many developed countries, most men and women initiate sexual activity prior to marriage;

(b) Paragraph 61 states:

In both developed and developing countries, many who become sexually active at a young age do not know how to protect themselves during sexual activity. Young women are often unable to negotiate condom use with male partners and may fear violence if they try to do so. One third of new cases of curable sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) each year — more than 100 million — are among women and men below age 25. Having an untreated STD significantly increases the risk of HIV infection.

¹ A/60/61-E/2005/7.

3. What we find from the above research is the trend towards premarital sex and the pressure this puts on a young woman's belief in and expression of her own dignity in front of a partner. What is worse is the difficulty that a female teenager goes through if she becomes pregnant at such a tender age. Her youth has been robbed and although any struggle in life may bring maturity to a person, one would hope that maturity would come through conscious choice, reasoning and direction. It is precisely these qualities, which exemplify restraint, which we feel must be emphasized in the declaration.

A solution

4. We would like to propose the concept of "rights to oneself" which is based on the philosophy of Zayn Al-'Ābidīn (the 4th Shi'a Imam and grandson of Prophet Muhammad). He said:

The greatest of God's rights against you is the right which He has made incumbent upon you for Himself and which is the root of all rights, then those which He has made incumbent upon you in yourself, from your crown to your foot, in keeping with the diversity of your organs. He has given your tongue a right against you, your hearing a right against you, your sight a right against you, your hand a right against you, your leg a right against you, your stomach a right against you, and your private part a right against you. These are the seven organs through which acts take place.

And in talking about the private part, he said: "The right of your private part is that you protect it from fornication and guard it against being looked upon."²

5. The deeper meaning behind the above is to foster greater responsibility in human beings to be aware of actions they commit against themselves and each other. However, this can only be done when individuals realize that their natural biological tools are owed duties and these duties stem from respecting the way in which these tools are used. In order to combat the problem of premarital sex and teenage pregnancies, the Centre for Islamic Shi'a Studies of the Alulbayt Foundation proposes to:

- (a) Include the idea of "rights to oneself" within the Beijing Declaration;
 - (b) Practically incorporate the idea of "rights to oneself" within sex and health education of young women in schools and community centres;
 - (c) Promote classes that teach both young women and men about personal awareness of one's natural biological tools.
6. The Alulbayt Foundation would be happy to offer its services in helping to construct a model for this and is already committed to doing so by promoting this kind of personal awareness among male and female youths in its clinics in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and in the Middle East, through its international branches.

² Chittick, W., *Al-Saheefa Al-Sajjadiyyah* (The Psalms of Islam), Ansariyan Publications.

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Statement by Legião da Boa Vontade, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

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* E/CN.6/2010/1.



Statement

1. The fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which will be held from 1 to 12 March 2010 at United Nations Headquarters in New York, will gather representatives of Member States, United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations. The session will be a landmark for the evaluation of governmental and civil society efforts towards the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000). The United Nations must demonstrate effective leadership in identifying and addressing discrimination against women in the 12 critical areas of concern: poverty, education, health, violence against women, armed conflict, the economy, power and decision-making, advancement of women, human rights, the media, the environment and the girl child.
2. As a way of sharing good practices, Legião da Boa Vontade presents to Governments, organizations and participants at events its experience in the themes under debate and its activities to promote the eradication of violence against women. The organization supports women and girls by offering food and psychological, legal and social support and by contributing to family harmony through the transmission of universal values and raising awareness of the importance of living such values.
3. Legião da Boa Vontade was founded in Brazil by Alziro Zarur (1914-1979) on 1 January 1950 (World Peace Day); its president is the journalist José de Paiva Netto. It is a civil society non-profit association that promotes individual rights and has charitable, philanthropic, educational, cultural, philosophical, ecumenical and altruistic purposes. It is recognized in Brazil and abroad for its social and educational work.
4. As an international reference for education with ecumenical spirituality, it has collaborated, since its early days, on improving the quality of life of populations living in a situation of social and/or personal vulnerability, by means of programmes and awareness and social mobilization campaigns. The organization promotes the advancement of the human being and gives value to life by providing information to the media, schools and communities about subjects of general interest. In particular, it warns them about problems of violence in all social spheres and the urgency of taking effective measures to fight for a society that truly shows solidarity.
5. For 60 years, Legião da Boa Vontade has developed appropriate strategies for the advancement and empowerment of women and the prevention of gender inequalities. With a history of best practices and its Solidary Society Network, which unites multiple stakeholders to contribute to the achievement of the eight Millennium Development Goals, the organization accelerates poverty reduction and reinforces the sustainable advancement of women in society.
6. The organization's socio-educational actions comprise basic education schools, community and educational centres and family and social reintegration homes. In these units, Legião da Boa Vontade supports women's sustainable economic growth and achievement, through the following programmes: Legião da Boa Vontade — Children: The future in the present!; Legião da Boa Vontade — Youth: The future in the present!; Legião da Boa Vontade — Sport is life!; training courses entitled

“Community Library” and “Charity Round”; and Women-BEING (baby citizen project).

7. Legião da Boa Vontade consolidates a comprehensive agenda that supports women’s empowerment in civil society and a just and fair standard of living for all: men, women, boys and girls. Its actions to improve the quality of life of humanity and the sustainability of our planet were underscored by the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, during his visit to the organization’s facilities and day-care centres in Brazil:

“The affection, love and dedication of Legião da Boa Vontade with respect to these children make us believe that Brazil and the world can be much better, that it is possible to eradicate hunger, illiteracy and absolute poverty. I want to make known the work that is carried out here by the friends of Legião da Boa Vontade. (...) That is why I leave here amazed with the work carried out by you all. I leave Legião da Boa Vontade with the certainty that the word solidarity may yet become one of the keywords for us to recover our Brazil and transform it into a just and fraternal country, in which people live with far more love. (...) Legião da Boa Vontade is an example of life”.

8. Violence, a major anomaly in society, must be removed from within each person through re-education for peace and by introducing ethical, moral and spiritual values in the hearts of people. The child who is cared for and raised with these values will become an adult who is a builder of good and an activist for solidarity without borders. That is why the actions of Legião da Boa Vontade are based on a spirit of cooperation and guided by a spontaneous feeling of love for our fellow human beings, with a special emphasis on the family and its effective participation in society. All of its initiatives focus on education and the re-education of the individual, so that he or she can experience an ecumenical citizenship through the full exercise of global solidarity, which is beyond beliefs, disbeliefs, traditions or ethnic backgrounds. The organization’s flag is ecumenical and is based on the New Testament Commandment “Love one another as I have loved you” (Gospel according to John, 13:34), because love is the greatest force for promoting fraternity, companionship, equality, mutual respect and other essential values for coexistence.

9. In a study published in his book *Reflexões da Alma* (Reflections of the Soul), Paiva Netto, creator of the methodologies “Pedagogy of affection” and “Ecumenical citizen pedagogy”, states that: “The moral fragility of the world is so advanced that, in order to put an end to violence, there is only one strong medicine: the ascent of supportive fraternity, allied to justice, in education. That is why ecumenical teaching is a powerful antidote against aggressiveness. (...) To renew — with ardent solidarity or, in other words, with passion and compassion, goodwill and faith — is to shake up souls and awaken spirits, enlightening their conscience, without leading individuals to draw blood, to cause pain or to cause death. When I speak of love, I do not confuse it with the cowardly acceptance of that which is unethical. On the contrary, the exercise of love requires the perfect feeling of justice.”

10. All the work of Legião da Boa Vontade is carried out through its social and educational units (basic education schools, homes for children, adolescents and the elderly, and community and educational centres) and through awareness and social mobilization campaigns. What makes this work so different is the application of the “Pedagogy of affection” and the “Ecumenical citizen pedagogy” methodologies,

which spearhead the educational approach used on a daily basis, with great success, in the programmes developed by the organization throughout the country. Examples include the “Learning and Interaction”, “Baby Citizen” and “Professional Training” programmes, offered to women with different life stories, including depression, sexual abuse, domestic violence, early pregnancy and unemployment, are welcomed. Legião da Boa Vontade provides such women educational, technical and psychological support.

11. Legião da Boa Vontade implements projects that aim to create cooperatives and associations, in order to provide employment opportunities to women and thereby contribute to their financial independence; the projects are designed primarily for women who suffer domestic violence, so that they can free themselves from abuse. Through recycling and handicraft courses given at the organization’s educational and community centre in the city of Ribeirão Preto, State of São Paulo, women assisted by the organization created a company called AB Fomm Comércio e Confecções de Embalagens, which provides services to graphic companies in that region, producing shopping bags for stores, boxes and other cardboard products.

12. The Jesus Grammar School, operated by Legião da Boa Vontade in the city of Belém, State of Pará, in the heart of the Amazon region, daily receives hundreds of students who live in situations of social risk. Girls and boys between the ages of three and six remain in school full-time, in an environment where they are taught ethical and spiritual principles and are exposed to the “Pedagogy of Affection”. This educational method, which focuses on children up to 10 years of age, unites feeling and cognitive development, so that care and affection blend with knowledge in the students’ environments, including the school. Legião da Boa Vontade not only performs this kind of work with children, but also extends its social and educational activities to the families. Every month, the organization brings together the students’ parents, so that they can see the importance of family participation in their children’s education. The effects of this extensive work are very positive, especially for mothers, who report an improvement in family life. That is why the education professionals from the Jesus Grammar School are invited to present the subjects taught at the school to community schools and district associations in several localities in this part of the Amazon region.

13. One of the organization’s solutions to domestic violence and other forms of violence against women and girls is to encourage women and girls, through campaigns and inclusion programmes promoting “Education and culture with spirituality, so there may be food, security, health and work for everyone, to form the ecumenical citizen” (one of the organization’s mottos), which signals a new horizon. A person who receives instruction based on the concept of full citizenship will not accept ways of living that exclude harmony, understanding and an exchange of views.

14. The chain of connections that build up society begins with the family. A violent home produces deviations. Society must make every effort to eradicate every kind of violence, without delay. This is even more urgent in cases where the victim is a woman, as she is an educator of future generations and the one who directly maintains social order. For this reason, Legião da Boa Vontade launched, in 2009, a special edition of the goodwill magazine *The Strength of Women in Humanity*, paying tribute to those who have fought for and contributed to, a better world. The magazine also presents good practices and thematic discussions on ensuring gender

equality in the modern world. The following statement by the head of Legião da Boa Vontade, published in the magazine, is significant: "The role of women is so important that, even with all the obstacles produced by a male chauvinist culture, no organization that wishes to survive, whether it be religious, political, philosophical, scientific, business or family — can dismiss her support. Women, graced by divine breath, are the soul of everything, the soul of humanity, the good root, the basis of civilizations, the defence of human existence. What mother wishes to see her son or daughter die at war? Woe to us men, if it were not for elucidated, inspired and enlightened women!"



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Statement by Anglican Consultative Council, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

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Statement

“Women and men joined together in common faith, sacraments and ministry to contribute to the achievement of gender equality, development and peace”

1. The Anglican Consultative Council consists of 80 million members in 164 countries worldwide. As a priority group, the organization has invested in the training of over 200 women drawn from more than 50 countries in the fields of economic literacy, diplomacy and international advocacy. The membership advocates for the strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Millennium Development Goals.

2. The Council believes that activities to strengthen and deepen the impact of actions for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action need to start through prayer and service that ensure all rights, especially women's rights and basic needs, are met. The Council works in partnership with Governments, non-State actors and other faith communities, making deliberate connections between the instruments and tools for gender equality and women's empowerment. Its work includes reviews of the cumulative gains of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action and the gender targets of the Millennium Development Goals, factoring into its analysis the impact of the current financial and economic, climate and food crisis.

A. Achievements in and obstacles to gender equality and empowerment of women

3. The Council supports Governments that have worked towards the requirements contained in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women for women's equality before the law.¹ We also note a number of national Governments, especially in the developing and Nordic countries, that have empowered women through affirmative action, thus enabling them to participate in decision-making and legislation.

4. **Obstacle:** This has not often translated into legislation and administrative practices to ensure women's equal rights. Nor have the legal instruments been linked to economic tools to ensure economic rights and access to economic resources in line with the strategic objective A.2 of the Beijing Platform for Action.

5. There have been mixed responses to gender equality and empowerment, even after the adoption of resolution 13.31 by the Council.² These desks provide gender-specific programmes that equip women with skills in leadership, decision-making, income generation, advocacy and economic literacy. In Rwanda, the Anglican Church has been active in publicly condemning gender-based violence, involving women in peace transformation and establishing women's clubs in all districts.

6. **Obstacle:** There are provinces that have never had women's desks and a few have closed them as a direct result of the economic and financial crisis. There are provinces that are still discussing the ordination of women that would place women in positions of leadership.

¹ See Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, article 15.

² ACC resolution 13.31, which called for the establishment of Women or Gender Desks in all Anglican Provinces.

7. We therefore call for:

(a) Consideration of a sustainable way of achieving women's equality, which includes ensuring it is enshrined within national policies, laws and administrative instruments and tools;

(b) Innovative and research-based tools for advocacy and dialogue for church resolutions that shall strengthen and complement Government policy formulation, legislation in ways that can be adopted in various actions, including evangelism and Church growth initiatives, in accordance to resolution 14.02,³ in addition to United Nations instruments;

(c) Partnerships built around tools and case studies for addressing areas of weaknesses in implementation, accountability for actions through development of common tools for assessing progress and gaps in achieving gender equality, development and peace;

(d) Tools to be used for comparing and evaluating progress throughout the different systems that can illustrate effective economic growth, poverty reduction and the right to development.

B. Actions for women in post-conflict situations

8. We support Security Council resolution 1888 (2009) on sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. Under the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Anglican Consultative Council has implemented post-conflict programmes of reconciliation and healing in Burundi and Rwanda, as well as in the Congo, the Sudan, and Melanesia. The Council has programmes to support post-conflict victims of violence and rape in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

9. Rwanda has worked in tandem with the Council as part of the faith community to develop new legislation to empower women, widows and girls and ensure the protection of their rights, including inheritance and property. In addition, the action undertaken towards women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution in post-conflict peacebuilding (as agreed at the fifty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2008) should be honoured. In light of the obstacles to these goals, we call for:

(a) The appointment of a special representative of the Secretary-General to drive, lead and coordinate all programmes derived from General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on violence;

(b) Provision of budget support for implementing conflict-related sexual violence programmes;

(c) Rapid responses to post-conflict domestic and gender-based violence, especially since emergency response is often removed after the conflict has been contained;

(d) Increased solidarity and partnership in counselling and trauma management for abused women in post-conflict situations;

³ ACC resolution 14.02.

(e) The creation of a “women’s protection and gender advisory on human rights”⁴ within United Nations peacekeeping missions;

(f) Development of a timetable for reporting on and a monitoring mechanism for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict-related sexual violence, as outlined in Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1888 (2009);

(g) Observing “Special Sundays” as a means of repentance, conversion and renewal in ways that lead to deeper communion;

(h) Establishment of means of rapid response and relief that is more effective in addressing the situation of minorities living in difficult contexts; support for the needs of indigenous people;

(i) Strengthen alliances of relief and development agencies to improve coordination in development, relief and advocacy work and to share best practices;

(j) Governments that have not yet become signatories to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples should sign it, with the active support of the churches in those countries;

(k) In cases where indigenous people are in the minority, there is a need to take appropriate and necessary steps to assist the healing of indigenous families, including the protection of women and children from violence and the threat of human trafficking.

C. Gender-focused strategies for natural resource utilization

10. In terms of the environment, the global economy and support of vulnerable people and communities, the Anglican Consultative Council encourages all Governments and institutions to weigh the environmental and financial costs of institutional activities, including the church; to work towards increasing access to safe water as an inviolable human right; to enable faith communities to consider energy services as practical and strategic need and promote the use of renewable energy to encourage and support development of skills and sustainability of appropriate use of science and technology; to advocate sustainable, restorative economies with national Governments, the United Nations (through the Anglican Observers Office) and local constituencies.

D. Gender-focused community rebuilding

11. Local churches have done tremendous work in rebuilding communities, even in cases where there is violence and conflict. The Episcopal development aid agencies, other churches, and secular non-governmental organizations should increase their support to strengthen the implementation of social development programmes. Through local churches, such programmes address the strategic needs of females and males.

⁴ Kathambi Kinoti, *Association for Women’s Rights in Development*, 2009.

E. Mobilizing women and men for comprehensive gender-focused actions

12. In Thailand, human trafficking brings in 500 billion Thai baht [SUS = 34 Thai baht] a year, a figure which is 50 to 60 per cent of the Government's annual budget, and more lucrative than the drug trade (Authorities and activists, Kulachada Chaipipat, "new law targets human trafficking", *The Nation*, 30 November 1997).

13. **Obstacles:** There is a reluctance to recognize the links between economic crises, poverty, trafficking in human persons and gender-based violence. In addition to being lucrative, trafficking in human persons is increasing as a result of the financial crisis, presenting a renewed need for both men and women to mobilize action in this regard. This financial and economic crisis has had a direct impact on households that goes beyond loss of housing and jobs. "The recent economic downturn is set to drive more vulnerable children and young people into exploitation by the global sex trade."⁵

"If you ask me, the Government is not correcting the source of the problem," says Asipong. "It's just treating the symptoms. Poverty is a big contribution to the problem in Thailand, especially in the countryside. Street children and stateless children are extremely vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation. We need to improve law enforcement and the economic welfare of children."⁶

14. The Anglican Consultative Council, in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and ECPAT, held an Asian regional consultation to address the issue of trafficking, especially trafficking in girls.

15. The best practice was from India where the Bishops, working closely with the community and local district authorities, have set up surveillance and monitoring and reporting systems for girls and any agents who may come into the community to recruit or traffic. They have also established a method for tracking and resettling trafficked girls and are now creating a means to economically empower the victims in their community.

16. The International Anglican Women's Network has made efforts to promote women's concerns in the church and in society. The efforts have provided support to actions to eliminate violence against women. Such mobilization has enabled all provinces to participate in programmes and events that promote the rights and welfare of women, particularly as expressed in the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals. Other efforts have included appropriate methods for the allocation of financial resources and actions to implement gender budgeting throughout the Anglican Communion.

⁵ Carmen Madrinam, Executive Director of ECPAT international, the organization that authored the August 2009 report.

⁶ Amanda Bissex, Chief of Child Protection, UNICEF, Thailand.



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Statement by la Coordination française du lobby européen des femmes, Femmes solidaires and Regards de femmes, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

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Statement

To Ms. Hansa Mehta of India, who succeeded in replacing the wording "rights of man" by "human rights", in the Universal Declaration, in order that all women of the world might have access to fundamental rights.

1. La coordination française du lobby européen des femmes (CLEF), Femmes solidaires and Regards de femmes reaffirm that certain practices, models and religious or traditional constraints limit the recognition of women's full capacity, their rights and the effective achievement of gender equality in terms of rights, duties and dignity.
2. CLEF, Femmes solidaires and Regards de femmes use secularism as a powerful tool for emancipation so that all women and girls living in France, including migrant women, can attain their independence and be protected by republican principles. They work in solidarity with women around the world.
3. These three monitor attacks on the rights and dignity of women perpetrated in France and all countries of the world under the guise of respect for traditions, customs or religious practices. It is therefore essential to reaffirm that the immediate corollary of freedom of conscience, a fundamental human right, is the neutrality of States with respect to philosophies or personal beliefs. Both these matters must remain private. *Flaunting or imposing them may offend the beliefs of others.*
4. The aforementioned organizations call on all Governments and the States parties to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol) and the Beijing Platform for Action to prohibit outright all forms of humiliation, discrimination or violence against women suffered or "chosen" by women, including in the name of religion or customs. The Millennium Development Goals recall that the problems faced by women are passed on to succeeding generations and must be eradicated. To combat poverty among women, all States should adopt laws on equality in inheritance between women and men and enforce them.
5. The context of the economic and financial crisis should not threaten to set back women's rights but, rather, should provide a window of opportunity. Recovery from the crisis requires the empowerment of women in all areas, including in economic fields, in order to achieve gender parity at all decision-making levels.
6. In order for girls to attain their independence and to be empowered, non-patriarchal education is essential for girls and boys. This will ensure that girls have access to all vocational areas and strengthen the fight against gender-based violence.

Deconstructing patriarchal traditions

7. Patriarchal traditions must disappear. Children's education, for boys and girls, must therefore include not only the transmission of human, cultural and scientific knowledge, but also teach them how to reflect, imagine, create and interact with others, to come to know persons who are different from them.

8. School is the place where children become part of humanity, both through learning and by meeting other people. That is why school must not be beholden to any political or religious ideology. Girls and boys must be taught to live together with mutual respect.

9. This was the reason for the 2004 French law against religious symbols in school, aimed at protecting the girl child and young girls.

10. If the girl child and young girls are seen as a source of disruption and must cover their hair in public places to protect boys, who are deemed incapable of controlling their impulses, this sends a message that is completely at odds with the principle of gender equality.

11. What view are girls and boys supposed to form of the world if their mothers and sisters must hide themselves behind a veil when they go outside? What image do they have of women?

12. In order to combat this degrading image of women, a French parliamentary task force on the wearing of the full veil has been holding meetings since July 2009.

13. CLEF, Femmes solidaires and Regards de femmes have been interviewed and have denounced cultural relativism as racism, since this subtlety is used to bar women from having access to the universal principles of dignity and human rights.

14. Confusion between culture and tradition keeps people apart. Culture is being used to prevent mutual coexistence. Respect for the culture of origin prevents any interaction with anyone who is different by making it a betrayal.

15. The universal refers to something shared by all human beings. It is not the negation of singularity but enables every person to escape from any form of oppression and to embrace the singular in a non-fanatical way. The universal is an empowering reference.

16. It entails thinking about the conditions for harmony, whereas singularities, where imposed as collective or political identities, are exclusive: custom against custom, belief against belief.

17. **Governments should provide programmes to promote equality between girls and boys** throughout the school year at all levels of the educational system. All relevant stakeholders (parents, teachers, careers advisers) should be involved in changing stereotypical images of men and women's social roles, which still influence career choices and boy-girl relationships.

18. To avoid early and unwanted pregnancies, and the transmission of HIV/AIDS, education for equality must include **sex education**.

Professional equality

19. Governments should introduce and support policies for professional equality training and equal access to continuing education, and should take measures to promote the equal sharing of non-remunerated work between women and men. Childcare and dependant care by high-quality professional social services help to create jobs and to reduce unemployment.

20. Governments should establish economic and social policies that promote gender equality, including equal pay and equal pensions. These policies should also combat poverty among women, particularly older women.

21. Governments should adopt mandatory measures for parity in decision-making bodies in the economic and financial sectors, on the executive boards of companies and in elected assemblies.

Combating violence

22. The term “violence”, as defined in article 1 of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, includes all forms of threats and physical, sexual or psychological harm or harassment.

23. Violence against women is a **fundamental obstacle** to the achievement of gender equality and a **violation of women’s human rights. The prerequisite for any effective policy is recognizing that all forms of violence against women are manifestations of patriarchal traditions.**

24. Violence against women is a continuous process, a relentless series of physical, verbal and sexual assaults and acts committed in various ways by men against women with the explicit aim of hurting, humiliating, intimidating and silencing them.

25. Governments should implement a multisectoral and coordinated approach to end violence against women at all levels in order to protect the rights of women everywhere. This approach must include violence prevention measures among men and boys, genuine and effective protection for victims and appropriate care for their recovery.

26. Programmes to combat violence against women must include measures against prostitution and trafficking. States must be guided by the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (1949), which punishes any person who “exploits the prostitution of another person, **even with the consent of that person**”; and the Palermo Protocol, particularly its article 3 (b), which reads: “**The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation ... shall be irrelevant**” in order to protect prostitutes and to punish clients and procurers.

27. Action plans to combat violence against women and young girls must address **customary violence** that violates human rights, such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation and so-called honour killings. In order to protect the physical integrity of all women, female genital mutilation must be criminalized. Appropriate care for victims should include clitoral reconstructive surgery provided by the State, in cases where the clitoris has been removed.

Women migrants and displaced women

28. Governments should ensure gender equality in their policies on women migrants. The dignity of the 200 million migrants worldwide must be a priority for all States. Many women migrants have a precarious status in the territories where they live and their fear of being reported to the immigration authorities drives them to accept psychological and physical abuse. These situations are conducive to, even incentives for, sordid trafficking and vigilance is needed to address them.

29. CLEF, Femmes solidaires and Regards de femmes call on Governments and States to provide women migrants and displaced women with access to:

- Personal documents (identity papers: birth certificate, marriage certificate, residence permit, work permit, etc.);
- Adequate housing;
- Equal pay for equal work;
- Initial and continuing education;
- Health services, including sexual and reproductive health;
- A social safety net (with information materials in their language); and,
- Legal assistance.

30. The member associations of Coordination française du lobby européen des femmes, Femmes solidaires and Regards de femmes are tirelessly pursuing their efforts in all areas of women's rights to ensure that empowerment, independence and gender equality in rights, duties and dignity are not only an ideal, but are effectively achieved.



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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals

Statement by Catholics for Choice, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2010/1.



Statement

Background

1. Catholics for Choice shapes and advances sexual and reproductive ethics that are based on justice, reflect a commitment to women's well-being and respect and affirm the capacity of women and men to make moral decisions about their lives. Through discourse, education and advocacy, the organization works with a global network of pro-choice Catholics in Europe and the rest of the world, including sister organizations throughout Latin America. Catholics for Choice has consultative status at the United Nations through the Economic and Social Council.

2. Catholics for Choice supports policymaking and governing structures that make a clear separation between church and state. At the same time, we also recognize that religion can make a positive contribution to law and policymaking, particularly in relation to social justice and the dignity of the human person. We strongly support the right of religious institutions to participate in the life of nations, to express their values and to inform public policy decisions. We do not think that religious organizations should be granted preferential status in policy decisions merely because they are religious.

Looking back at Beijing

3. In 1995, women from all over the world gathered in Beijing for the Fourth World Conference on Women. Non-governmental organizations, including Catholics for Choice, attended the meeting and encouraged Heads of State to implement policies that would guarantee the human rights of women. This quest for justice culminated in the Beijing Platform for Action, a global plan of action for Governments to ensure that justice for women prevails and that respect for their human rights is guaranteed.

4. The notion that women should be guaranteed full human rights caused much debate and even resistance from religious conservative delegations at Beijing. The loudest resistance came from the delegation of the Holy See.

5. At Beijing, the Vatican designated an international group of individuals to present a conservative Vatican agenda. This conference marked the first time that the Holy See's delegation was predominantly composed of women. The 1995 delegation also set a precedent by being the first to be led by a woman, who referred to the Platform for Action derogatorily as the product of "sexual libertarians, old-line feminists and coercive population controllers".

6. Despite the number of women on the Vatican's delegation, the 22 members did not bring a women's agenda to Beijing. Instead, they were mandated by the Vatican to veto any attempts to challenge positions that the Vatican has maintained, particularly with reference to issues of reproductive justice.

7. Though the Holy See delegation arrived in Beijing under directives from the Vatican to categorically and unwaveringly reject proposals that would advance the cause of reproductive justice, it claimed to speak for all Catholics, despite the great diversity of opinion among Catholics, many of whom disagree with significant aspects of church teaching.

8. In the end, though the Holy See expressed general reservations to the health section of the Platform for Action, the delegation was unable to sway States Members of the United Nations and the Platform was adopted by consensus.

The past fifteen years

9. As we look back over the past 15 years, there can be no doubt that great leaps have been made in terms of women's equality. However, there have also been significant setbacks. For every country where restrictions on abortion have been lifted, there are others that continue to prohibit this life-saving procedure. Contraception is readily available in some regions, while in others the means to time and space families are denied. Some people are learning how to prevent the transmission of HIV, while others are being fed untruths about condom use.

10. Unfortunately, in many of these instances, the Vatican has been a driving force in setting up obstacles for women, using the same backroom strategies that it employed in Beijing. And while they were unsuccessful in 1995, these strategies have been successful at times. On several occasions, Catholics for Choice has witnessed first-hand the adverse impact the Catholic hierarchy has had on women's rights throughout the world.

Millennium Development Goals

11. With regard to the Millennium Development Goals, the Vatican has proven to be just as adversarial. In September 2005, Catholics for Choice initiated an interfaith religious statement supporting the Millennium Development Goals and calling for the inclusion of reproductive health in the Goals.

12. The broad-based statement, "A faith-filled commitment to development includes a commitment to women's rights and reproductive health: religious reflections on the Millennium Development Goals", was focused on the Goals and on poverty eradication.

13. However, high-ranking Vatican officials instructed Catholic bishops to ensure that "no 'religious leader' of the Catholic church and subject to our jurisdiction agree and sign" the statement.

14. A memo articulating the Vatican's orders resulted in warnings to bishops throughout Latin America against signing the declaration. The Vatican's order put forward oft-repeated misinformation regarding United Nations definitions of reproductive health, insisting that they include abortion, and mischaracterized the religious leaders' declaration as a statement promoting abortion. The memo was leaked to the Latin American press and was widely seen as part of an ongoing effort by the Vatican to eliminate any references to reproductive health in United Nations documents.

15. These are but two examples of 15 years of strident opposition from the Vatican to women's rights, especially sexual and reproductive rights. All the while, the Vatican acts as if it speaks for all Catholics. However, common sense and poll numbers clearly prove otherwise. One poll found that 97 per cent of sexually active Catholic women have used a form of contraception banned by the church hierarchy. A poll by the United States bishops themselves found that only a paltry 11 per cent of all Americans support a total ban on abortion. Another poll by Catholics for Choice found that Catholics around the world support condom use as pro-life

because it helps prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS, including 90 per cent of Catholics in Mexico, 86 per cent of Catholics in Ireland, 79 per cent of Catholics in the United States of America and 77 per cent of Catholics in the Philippines.

Moving forward

16. Moving forward, we would like to see values that reflect the real needs of people around the world, Catholic and non-Catholic, infused into public policy. Currently the Holy See and members of the Catholic hierarchy are not lifting up these needs in their lobbying efforts. Until such a time when they do, the Commission on the Status of Women and other bodies at the United Nations must remain a strong and unwavering model for women's rights.

17. Catholics for Choice invites others to call on both the Catholic hierarchy and the States Members of the United Nations to recognize the importance of sexual and reproductive health and rights, thereby reaffirming women's equal human rights.

18. In conclusion, as the United Nations and its agencies work to secure sexual and reproductive health and rights as a key component of working towards women's full equality, Catholics for Choice commits itself to supporting these efforts through discourse, education, research and advocacy.



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Statement by the World Young Women's Christian Association, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2010/1.



Statement

1. The World Young Women's Christian Association (World YWCA) joins the United Nations, the Commission on the Status of Women and organizations around the world in commemorating 15 years since the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Beijing Platform for Action. Women from the YWCA movement have long been involved in contributing to the women's movement and to United Nations efforts to promote women's rights, gender equality and women's empowerment. The 12 critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action have informed the work of YWCA member associations providing services in over 20,000 communities around the world, while advocating with Governments and other stakeholders for accountability in protecting and promoting women's and girls' rights and dignity.

2. Great advances in respect of women have been made since 1995, especially in the areas of decision-making, laws, policies and education. According to *Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009*,¹ more women are running for public office and have access to health services, including prenatal care. More countries have revised their laws to ensure justice for women who face violence, including intimate partner abuse. The report also shows that more girls are attending school and staying in school longer.

3. Despite these advances, the situation for women, young women and girls in many communities is still deplorable. Although more women are elected to public office, women hold just 18.2 per cent of the world's parliamentary seats. In developing countries, half a million women die every year from complications during or after childbirth. The enrolment of girls in primary school in both developing and developed countries may be at the highest rate ever, but many girls face sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination while at school. The burden of domestic tasks also affects the quality of education that girls receive.

An intersectional approach to women's human rights

4. The global development and peace agenda stated in the Millennium Development Goals cannot be achieved until women are economically, socially and politically empowered, their rights are protected and they enjoy equal status with men. The last 15 years have shown the importance as well as the inadequacies of gender mainstreaming as an approach. The next 15 years demand new approaches that build on existing progress while accelerating the transformative actions for the empowerment of women and gender equality. The intersections of the 12 areas of the Beijing Platform for Action must be addressed and future solutions must be derived from a multisectoral approach.

5. Adopting a strong human rights-based approach ensures that gender equality is at the centre of the Millennium Development Goals. Many international instruments provide Member States with clear direction on how to ensure gender equality and the empowerment of women. These include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action, the Declaration of Commitment

¹ United Nations Development Fund for Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009: Who Answers to Women? Gender & Accountability* (New York, 2008).

of the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS and the Millennium Development Goals. These documents provide further guidance on the factors and solutions that can ensure women live full lives and enjoy human rights.

6. Identifying linkages between the Beijing Platform for Action, the Millennium Development Goals and other instruments is crucial. As the Millennium Development Goals have met with great political will and enjoy a high profile, the United Nations, Member States and civil society must make an extra effort to draw parallels from the Beijing Platform for Action to ensure that the Millennium Development Goals are fulfilled with a holistic approach that addresses all factors that can improve the status of women, young women and girls, thus promoting development and reducing poverty.

Women and health

7. A recent World Health Organization report shows that the leading cause globally of death among women of reproductive age is HIV/AIDS.² The report also indicates that pregnancy and childbearing present major risk factors for women and girls. Promoting the sexual and reproductive health and rights of all women and girls, including the right to safe motherhood, is therefore essential; a human rights approach must be adopted in addressing reproductive health.

8. Women make up about 50 per cent of all people living with HIV, and the proportion of women infected with HIV is increasing in Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America.³ In sub-Saharan Africa, the region most affected by AIDS, 60 per cent of all adults and three out of four young people living with the virus are female.⁴ These figures demonstrate the great threat to their personal health that women and girls face.

9. The intersection of sexual and reproductive health and rights, HIV and violence against women is a growing concern. Socio-economic factors and legal challenges that put many HIV-positive women at risk of violence must be addressed. Many HIV-positive women are beaten, thrown out of their homes and lose their possessions when they share their HIV status with their families. Governments, international organizations and civil society must ensure that laws and policies addressing inequality and poverty are implemented in order to protect women from violence.

10. Health-care services must address the global health inequities that women, young women and girls face, while recognizing the intersection of services to ensure that women receive appropriate health care in a manner where they are respected and not judged.

Violence against women

11. The safety and security of women is crucial to development. We welcome increased focus on eliminating violence against women, including the Secretary-

² World Health Organization, *Women and Health: Today's Evidence Tomorrow's Agenda* (Geneva, 2009).

³ Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, *2008 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic: Executive Summary* (Geneva, 2008).

⁴ Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the World Health Organization, *2007 AIDS Epidemic Update* (Geneva, 2007).

General's campaign. Several recent United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009), show commitments to end women's vulnerability, especially in conflict areas. These resolutions must be implemented.

12. Women face the risk of violence at every stage of their life cycle. Up to 70 per cent of women experience physical or sexual violence from men in their lifetime — the majority from husbands, intimate partners or someone they know.⁵ Among women aged 15 to 44, acts of violence cause more death and disability than cancer, malaria, traffic accidents and war combined.⁶

13. In 2002 alone, an estimated 150 million girls under 18 suffered some form of sexual violence.⁶ A recent World Health Organization study found that many women said their first sexual experience was not consensual. Creative solutions are needed to reach, protect and empower girls and young women.

14. The World YWCA welcomes the steps that Governments are taking worldwide to reform their legal systems in order to tackle violence against women, as advocated by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. A 2003 study by the United Nations Development Fund for Women shows that rape and sexual assault are widely recognized as crimes, but that progress is needed in instituting legislation on marital rape and sexual harassment. Over 120 countries worldwide have legislation on sexual assault, but only 43 have legislation on marital rape.

15. Enforcement of law must be ensured and Member States must expand gender-responsive justice systems to facilitate women's access to legal systems. Governments, international organizations and civil society must ensure that laws and policies that uphold women's human rights are enforced in order to protect women from violence.

Women in power and decision-making

16. Fifteen years after Beijing, many more women are in politics and positions of power. The representation of women in national assemblies has accelerated from 11.6 per cent in 1995 to 18.4 per cent in 2008.¹ From 1975 to 1995 the rate of increase was less than 1 per cent. But we still lag behind set goals. To ensure goals are met, Governments must engage women at all levels of society.

17. It is important to address women's access to political power, but women's leadership at the community level is also crucial to achieving development goals and ending poverty. Governments must include women more and partner with non-governmental organizations to achieve these goals.

18. Young women are especially important for leadership. Youth engagement leads to youth development and youth development contributes to the health of vibrant and inclusive communities.

⁵ World Health Organization, *Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women* (Geneva, 2005).

⁶ United Nations Development Fund for Women, "Violence against women worldwide", fact sheet.

Recommendations

19. The World YWCA calls on the Commission on the Status of Women to:

(a) Invest in women and girls: adequate and accessible funding must be provided for services that provide holistic solutions to the factors that prevent gender equality and women's empowerment;

(b) Ensure the safety and security of women and girls: create safe spaces, to ensure the physical, sexual and psychological safety of women and girls in all aspects of their lives;

(c) Involve women: all women, including women working at the community level, young women and women living with HIV must be meaningfully involved in relevant decision-making, respecting their right to self-determination and enabling their participation in developing strategies to the challenges they face;

(d) Expand access to comprehensive services: through a life cycle and multisectoral approach, ensure women and girls have access to the information and services they need to live healthy lives;

(e) Promote women's leadership: encourage the participation of women at all levels of society, including through the equitable representation of women at the highest levels of national political, executive, legislative and judicial structures;

(f) Keep promises made: commitments made to fight HIV/AIDS, promote sexual and reproductive health and rights and combat violence against women must be respected, and laws that promote gender equality and eliminate violence against women enforced, as advocated by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.